

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

*Media Office*

*Democratic Caucus*

*John Schorg, Director*

*Statehouse, Room 157*

*Indianapolis, Indiana 46204*

*1-800-382-9842 or 1-317-232-9621*

*Fax Number: 1-317-232-9792*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**February 1, 2005**

### **SMITH DISMAYED BY BILLS CALLING FOR A MORATORIUM ON STATE COMMITTEES**

INDIANAPOLIS -- State Rep. Vernon Smith (D-Gary) is upset that new legislation being proposed in both the Indiana House and Senate could terminate a variety of state committees that cover everything from licensing boards to minority issues. Gov. Mitch Daniels has stated that this legislation is one of the top priorities on his agenda.

"House Bill 1188 and Senate Bill 625 were not initially introduced by Gov. Daniels, but he has given his support for them," said Smith. "Gov. Daniels has said that he views this as an emergency measure. However, I feel that Gov. Daniels has not fully thought this matter out. He wants to get rid of these committees without actually reviewing whether or not they are effective. That's putting the cart before the horse. It would be better to first review which committees are effective, then make recommendations as to what should be eliminated."

Smith disagrees with provisions in both bills that give the Government Efficiency Commission the power to determine which boards and committees are effective and which ones have outlived their usefulness.

"The Indiana General Assembly created these boards and committees; therefore, it should remain in the power of the General Assembly to decide which boards and committees are necessary and which are not," said Smith.

While Gov. Daniels has criticized these committees as being only another layer of government, Smith feels that these groups are necessary, since they focus on issues that are frequently ignored.

"Such boards as Commission for a Drug Free Indiana, the Indiana Coalition on Women, the Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, and the Commission on the Social Status of Black Males all confront issues that are frequently ignored in government and society," said Smith. "Yet all of these boards have accomplished wonderful things for the people that they affect."

The Commission on the Social Status of Black Males is of special importance to Smith, since he authored the bill creating the group. The commission confronts the problems that black males face in society, including violence, lack of education, wage discrepancies and drug use.

"It disturbs me that in Indiana, there are more black men in jail than there are in college," said Smith. "That is why it is so necessary to keep the Commission on the Social Status of Black Males. How else will this issue be focused on? Who else will pay attention to the problems black males face in society? Who will work to solve those problems?"

Smith also questions what the governor is trying to accomplish by supporting this moratorium.

"Gov. Daniels has said that he wants more people to become involved in Indiana's government," he said. "These boards and commissions, which are made up of the citizens of Indiana, represent one of the most direct ways that people can take part in the governance of this state. Yet Gov. Daniels wants to get rid of them. I feel that the Governor is really only on a quest for power."